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**Written Testimony of
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Labor and Public Employees Committee
Tuesday, February 10, 2009**

In Support of:

H.B. 6188, AAC State Employees and Violence and Bullying in the Workplace

Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony in support of **H.B. 6188, AAC State Employees and Violence and Bullying in the Workplace**, which would codify existing language regarding violence in the workplace for state employees and provide new language about abusive conduct to address workplace bullying.

According to the Workplace Bullying Institute, workplace bullying is defined as the repeated, health-endangering mistreatment of one or more persons by one or more perpetrators that take the form of: verbal abuse; threatening, humiliating or offensive behavior/actions; and/or work interference—sabotage—which prevents work from getting done.¹

According to a 2007 survey conducted by the National Workplace Bullying Institute, which looked at issues of verbal abuse, job sabotage and misuse of authority,² workplace bullying has become an epidemic. Thirty-seven percent of American workers, an estimated 54 million people, have been bullied at work. It affects half (49%) of American workers, 71.5 million workers, when witnesses are included. In addition, bullying is 4 times more prevalent than illegal forms of "harassment."³ This type of bullying most strongly effects women because 58% of all perpetrators are women. The victims are also overwhelmingly women - 81% of female bully's targets are women and 71% of male bully's targets are women.

¹ <<http://www.bullyinginstitute.org/bbstudies/def.html>>.

² *NY Times*. "A Sisterhood of Workplace Infighting," January 11, 2009.

³ <<http://bullyinginstitute.org/zogby2007/wbi-zogby2007.html>>.

Workplace bullying can have very detrimental affects on a person's health. The most common affect of workplace bullying is anxiety, stress or excessive worrying (76%). These affects are closely followed by: loss of concentration (71%), disrupted sleep (71%), feeling edgy, irritable, easily startled and constantly on guard (60%) and stress headaches (55%).⁴

Additionally the abusive conduct that results from workplace bullying has negative affects for employers. In addition to obvious financial costs such as increased turnover rates of staff, employers can also be harmed by bad public relations and even develop a bad reputation for being a place of employment with a hostile environment.⁵

Workplace bullying is a very real issue and clearly has negative impacts on its victims, the majority of which are women. We appreciate continued attention to this matter, and look forward to working with you on this important issue.

⁴ <http://www.bullyinginstitute.org/res/2003E.html>

⁵ <http://bullyinginstitute.org/education/bbstudies/econ.html>